

Political Science

Course 17

Would you like to know more about the connection between science, technology, and public policy? Do you think it matters whether the United States takes the lead in promoting laws and policies that protect the environment and stop global warming? Are you concerned about problems of poverty, hunger, and homelessness in this country and in other parts of the world? What are some of the conflicts between national security and individual freedom after September 11, 2001? Do you care whether Democrats, Republicans, or Independents are elected to office in the United States? Whatever your point of view, you can begin a path that can help you to make a difference with a political science degree.

Political Science at MIT

Political science is the systematic study of governmental and political processes at home and abroad. Although MIT is best known for its excellence in the sciences and engineering, the Institute also has one of the world's foremost political science departments. Members of the faculty are among the leading specialists in their fields, from Japanese industrial development to global environmental sustainability, from congressional voting behavior to campaign finance practices, and from international human rights to the causes and prevention of war. Faculty members regularly contribute to critical issues in public affairs through their writing and teaching.

MIT's Department of Political Science offers over 70 undergraduate classes. The department continually updates its curriculum in order to focus on important issues in the world today. Courses recently added to the curriculum include: *The War at Home: American Politics and Society in Wartime*; *Ethics, Economy, and Social Policy*; *The Politics of Global Financial Relations*; *Ethnic Conflict and World Politics*; *International Political Economy*; *Media Politics*; *International Politics and Climate*

Change; *The Politics of WMD Proliferation*; *Migration and International Relations*; *Public Opinion and American Democracy*; *The Politics of Race and Science*; and *U.S. Social Policy*.

The fields of security studies, U.S. politics, comparative politics, ethnic conflict, political behavior, and political economy are particularly strong at MIT. Areas of the world that receive emphasis include China, Japan, Mexico, Latin America, the Middle East, and Eastern and Western Europe. Courses in U.S. politics include Congress, electoral politics, political parties, political economy, public opinion, health policy, and social policy.

Undergraduate Program

Students majoring in political science choose from a wide variety of courses. In addition to their electives, they are expected to complete at least one course each in political theory, U.S. politics, comparative or international perspectives, and public policy. All majors write a senior thesis on a topic of their choice under the supervision of two faculty advisors.

Some majors in political science focus their work directly on politics of the United States, Western Europe, Asia, or other parts of the world. Others concentrate their attention on public policy issues that supplement their interests in science and engineering, such as effective regulation of hazardous wastes or bioengineering, or the politics and technology of security and global sustainability.

The number of undergraduate majors in the department is relatively small (30–40); therefore, political science majors receive a great deal of individual attention from their faculty advisors. In the more advanced undergraduate classes, class size ranges between 10 and 20 students, and faculty members teach all classes. Upperclass undergraduates are free to enroll in most of the

graduate political science classes offered by the department.

Undergraduates may elect to minor in political science. The Minor Program requires students to complete six subjects in the field from a curriculum arranged into at least two levels (tiers), expressing different degrees of sophistication in the articulation and resolution of intellectual problems.

Students electing a Minor Program in Political Science will begin to acquire mature competence in its practice. Students who complete the Minor Program will satisfy the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS) concentration requirement in that field of study.

Research

The department believes that every political science major should have the experience of conducting and writing at least one research project. For most majors, the senior thesis provides such an opportunity. The Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) allows undergraduates to work on current research with faculty members. Recent UROP projects include an analysis of the effects of the media on public opinion, an examination of budgetary politics and policy, the creation of a software system to demonstrate changes in global political environment, a study of campaign contributions and their effects on politicians, an investigation of violence against African Americans following World War II, and a critique of managed care reform.

The MIT Washington Summer Internship Program provides technically sophisticated undergraduates the opportunity to apply their scientific and technical training to public policy issues. The core of the program is focused on the summer months, when students selected to participate in the program work in the offices of government agencies, the private sector, and advocacy groups. Complementing the summer internships is a trip to Washington during spring break and a 12-unit HASS seminar on the policy-making process.

The Political Science Local Internship Program allows undergraduates from all departments at MIT

opportunities for “real world” experiences in places where political activity and policy making actually take place in Boston and Cambridge. Students work under the supervision of an MIT instructor and a field supervisor and earn Institute credit for placements in government agencies, legislative offices, community groups, international organizations, and advocacy groups.

The department offers a community service class in which students combine experiential learning with reading, writing, and reflection on urban politics and policy. Students participating in the class volunteer in a community service agency or an advocacy group and receive Institute credit.

Post-Baccalaureate Opportunities

The undergraduate program prepares students for graduate study in political science, law, public policy, and international administrations and for careers in government, business, legislative and policy research, teaching, and journalism. Recent graduates are currently working in the Massachusetts State House, Brookings Institution, the Office of Management and Budget, the U.S. Senate, the World Bank, Wall Street, the Institute for Defense Analyses, AT&T International, and IBM.

Contact Information

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The MIT Course Catalog contains further information on the Institute, including all graduate and undergraduate courses and programs. For details on ordering the course catalogue, please visit the MIT Press Bookstore website at <http://web.mit.edu/bookstore/www/bulletin.html>.

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